3/1/77

Dear Phil,

Again thanks for the clip. Particularly valuable are the Press-Scimitar 2/25/77 and the Commercial-Appeal of the next morning. Valuable for what they say and for the further clarification of who Morris Cunningham really is. He is the up and coming replacement, or would-be replacement, for Angus McEachern.

The P-S Scripps-Howrd story has Bell saying he would like to "negotiate" with Ray. Cunningham had to knock this down - and did - unfactually. The only sense of Bell's remarks is that he wants to negotiate. However, that is in the context of Ray's guilt. This his lawyer cannot permit.

While Ray's letter to the committee and to the Deoartment, each, was ill-advised and poorly phrased, and I really think Cunningham had in mind a foolish one to Tony Lewis of the New York Times, it was not really "capricious" and there is no doubt that Lesar neither called it that or considers it that.

What Ray was trying to say in his own cute way is that if those he considers and calls whores, like George McMillan, will testify before the committee, he will "consider" it. Considering it and doing it are not identical. He was pulling legs.

These clips do include what has not appeared elsewhere and thus have added value.

There was an earlier Departmental effort to negotiate with Ray, not mentioned in the report. That was in 1970. Implicit in that was a deal. it may not have been explicit. My understanding is that it also was based on the assumption of guilt but that if he would name names they'd turn him loose in England.

If you have any clips on the 3/28/68 riot and its aftermath I would welcome them. Perhaps if you do not Kay can prowide them.

When you speak to her please share this with her for whatever use she may find in it. I do not have her jome address and I do not think my writing her at the paper will help her in any way.

I am particularly anxipus to keep abreast of what Mark Lane is up to. Not because he is a competitor but because he operates in disinformation. I take it there have been no Memphis stories. His sidekick, Donald Freed, an animated atrocity, is currently appearing in the Black Panther paper. The most recent issue has James and Jerry Ray and J.B.Stoner of the State Rights Party constituting the conspiracy-with the FBI!

This thing is ripening. I believe there may be some developments in 3-4 months.

By this I mean aside from the omnipresent bullshit.

Now if I were free-lancing and looking for a story on this I'd be trying to learn who is the source of the committee's leak and them statement through Fauntroy about Ray's alleged contact then modified to intended contact in Portugal. It was attributed to one who saw him after his arrest and is not a member of his family or one of his lawyers. With Lane's denial taken at face value this limits it to those Ray has seen. This limits it to former fellow prisoners and prison officials. If I were trying I'd start with Avery and then go to Lake Russell, both of whom spoke to Jimmy. I'm sure Jimmy said no such thing. But then wasn't Russell fired at least in part over his literary ambitions with Jimmy?

Cunningham is now to me. What do you know about him?

Best,